The Status of the Claims

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of fusing first and second datasets,

comprising:

determining an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with the first

and second datasets;

generating a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on the

importance ranking of the plurality of variables, wherein each of the levels defines match

criteria for satisfying a matching records condition by indicating which of the variables are to

match;

identifying first and second sets of match candidates from the first and second

datasets based on one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid; and

fusing records in the first and second sets of match candidates based on probabilities

associated with the records.

2.   (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein determining

the importance ranking of the plurality of variables includes ranking the plurality of variables

based on a relative strength of a relationship between each of the variables and a respondent

characteristic.

3.   (Cancelled).

4.   (Currently Amended) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein generating the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables includes generating a series of binary values <u>for each level of the hierarchical grid</u> so that each of a plurality of bit positions associated with the binary values uniquely corresponds to one of the plurality of variables<u>, wherein the binary values define whether a corresponding one of the variables is to match in the first and second sets of match candidates</u>.

5.   (Cancelled).

6.   (Cancelled).

7.   (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the generating the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables includes generating the hierarchical matching grid to allow skewed matching on one or more of the variables.

8.   (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein generating the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables includes establishing a minimum matching level.

9.   (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein identifying the first and second sets of match candidates from the first and second datasets based on the one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid includes using match criteria from the one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid to identify records in the second dataset that match records in the first dataset on ones of the plurality of variables defined by the match criteria.

10.   (Cancelled).

11.   (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein fusing the records in the first and second sets of match candidates based on the probabilities associated with the records includes establishing the probabilities based on weights associated with records from at least one of the first and second sets of match candidates.

12.   (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, further comprising:

comparing a first sum of weights associated with the first set of match candidates with a second sum of weights associated with the second set of match candidates;

identifying one of the first and second sets of match candidates as overweight based on the comparison of the first and second sums of weights; and

trimming records of one of the first and second sets of match candidates identified as overweight prior to fusing the records in the first and second sets of match candidates.

13.　　(Cancelled).

14.　　(Cancelled).

15.　　(Cancelled).

16.　　(Currently Amended) A system for fusing first and second datasets,

comprising:

a memory; and

a processor coupled to the memory and configured to:

determine an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with the

first and second datasets;

generate a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on

the importance ranking of the plurality of variables, <u>wherein each of the levels defines</u>

<u>match criteria for satisfying a matching records condition by indicating which of the</u>

<u>variables are to match</u>;

identify first and second sets of match candidates from the first and second

datasets based on one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid; and

fuse records in the first and second sets of match candidates based on

probabilities associated with the records.

17.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to determine the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by ranking the plurality of variables based on a relative strength of a relationship between each of the variables and a respondent characteristic.

18.   (Cancelled).

19.   (Currently Amended) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to generate the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by generating a series of binary values <u>for each level of the hierarchical grid</u> so that each of a plurality of bit positions associated with the binary values uniquely corresponds to one of the plurality of variables<u>, wherein the binary values define whether a corresponding one of the variables is to match in the first and second sets of match candidates</u>.

20.   (Cancelled).

21.   (Cancelled).

22.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to generate the hierarchical matching grid having the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by generating the hierarchical matching grid to allow skewed matching on one or more of the variables.

23.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to generate the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by establishing a minimum matching level.

24.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to identify the first and second sets of match candidates from the first and second datasets based on the one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid by using match criteria from the one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid to identify records in the second dataset that match records in the first dataset on ones of the plurality of variables defined by the match criteria.

25.   (Cancelled).

26.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to fuse the records in the first and second sets of match candidates based on the probabilities associated with the records by establishing the probabilities based on weights associated with records from at least one of the first and second sets of match candidates.

27.   (Previously Presented) A system as defined in claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to:

compare a first sum of weights associated with the first set of match candidates with a second sum of weights associated with the second set of match candidates;

identify one of the first and second sets of match candidates as overweight based on the comparison of the first and second sums of weights; and

trim records of the one of the first and second sets of match candidates identified as overweight prior to fusing the records in the first and second sets of match candidates.

28.   (Cancelled).

29.   (Cancelled).

30.   (Cancelled).

31. (Currently Amended) A machine readable medium having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause a machine to:

determine an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets;

generate a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables, wherein each of the levels defines match criteria for satisfying a matching records condition by indicating which of the variables are to match;

identify first and second sets of match candidates from the first and second datasets based on one of the plurality of levels of the hierarchical matching grid; and

fuse records in the first and second sets of match candidates based on probabilities associated with the records.

32. (Previously Presented) A machine readable medium as defined in claim 31 having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause the machine to determine the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by ranking the plurality of variables based on a relative strength of a relationship between each of the variables and a respondent characteristic.

33.   (Currently Amended) A machine readable medium as defined in claim 31 having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause the machine to generate the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by generating a series of binary values <u>for each level of the hierarchical grid</u> so that each of a plurality of bit positions associated with the binary values uniquely corresponds to one of the plurality of variables<u>, wherein the binary values define whether a corresponding one of the variables is to match in the first and second sets of match candidates</u>.

34.   (Previously Presented) A machine readable medium as defined in claim 31 having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause the machine to generate the hierarchical matching grid including the plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables by generating the hierarchical matching grid to allow skewed matching on one or more of the variables.

35-67.   (Cancelled).